



PARTNERSHIP ON MICROFINANCE

WHAT IS THE MICROFINANCE INCLUSION AND INNOVATION PROJECT?

The USAID Microfinance Inclusion and Innovation Project is a three-year, \$1.4 million initiative to improve access to financial products tailored to the needs of low income households, entrepreneurs, and micro, small, and medium enterprises. The goal is to create new jobs, galvanize economic growth, and reducing poverty to help North Macedonia converge with EU accession criteria. In partnership with the Alliance of Microfinance Organizations as implementer, we work to upgrade the IT platforms of intermediate finance institutions; improve financial literacy among entrepreneurs, students, farmers, and others across the country; train the personnel of microfinance institutions; assist with drafting of and implementing legislation impacting the financial sector; and organize regional forums topics of interest to the microfinance sector.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

- IT platforms successfully procured, installed and operational in three microfinance organizations.
- Thirty (30) two-day financial literacy workshops organized where 743 farmers, entrepreneurs, students, women, and Roma representatives increased their financial capabilities to become viable clients of non-banking financial institutions.
- Over 110 front office and 76 back-office staff of microfinance organizations improved their client management and financial management skills.
- Organized a regional Forum on Payment Services for Better Financial Inclusion with representatives of the National Bank of North Macedonia, Albania, Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia, as well as credit unions from Ireland, US, UK, Moldova and Poland. The forum helped the Ministry of Finance and the National Bank of North Macedonia strengthen the draft of a new Payment Services Law.
- In partnership with the National Bank and the national coordination body for financial education and inclusion, USAID supported the creation of the “*Smart money management - personal finance guide*”.
- The Project helped microfinance organizations increase compliance with International Financial Reporting Standards.
- Over 200 staff were trained on anti-money laundering and prevention of terrorism financing.
- The Alliance has become a recognized, relevant counterpart of the public and private sectors on microfinance issues, actively engaged in public-private dialogue and policy proposals, providing professional and evidence-based solutions.